

March 13, 2022

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am writing in **support of**:

- S.B. No. 387: AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.
- S.B. No. 392: AN ACT CONCERNING STATEMENTS MADE BY JUVENILES.

I am writing in **opposition to** the following bills:

- S.B. No. 365: AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORMS
- S.B. No. 388: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEFENSE OF A PERSON OR A PERSON'S DWELLING, PLACE OF WORK OR MOTOR VEHICLE.
- H.B. No. 5418: AN ACT REVISING JUVENILE AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE STATUTES AND INSURANCE STATUTES CONCERNING THEFT OF A MOTOR VEHICLE
- H.B. No. 5417: AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE AND SERVICES AND FIREARMS BACKGROUND CHECKS.
- S.B. No. 386: AN ACT CONCERNING A STUDY OF THE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY LAWS OF THIS STATE.

My name is Emily Hofstatter, and I am a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance (GHIAA). Our GHIAA congregations and members stand ready to defeat policies that are rooted in racist rhetoric and faulty data. To learn more, please watch this eye-opening 7-minute video on GHIAA's position: <https://vimeo.com/686784926>

The Juvenile Justice System in Connecticut has been largely successful. Connecticut has been a model in the country on how to reduce the juvenile justice system and expand diversion and services for youth successfully and safely. **The legislation I oppose today is a departure from these practices.** Now is not the time to roll back important advances in youth justice through legislation. These bills are rooted in a misinformation campaign and lack sound analysis. They will lead to more of our youth becoming involved in the system and perpetuate harm rather than support and opportunity.

Adolescent brains develop through the age of 25. This period of development is associated with greater impulsiveness and stronger emotional responses than older adulthood. Funding should be prioritized for juvenile justice programs, policies, and practices that are backed by research and evidence showing effectiveness.

Locking up youth in adult prison does not address root issues. According to a recent state audit, the overwhelming majority of transferred boys, and all the transferred girls, in the adult system during 2019 lived in families previously investigated for child abuse or neglect, often multiple times. The audit found that most boys in the system completed few or no programs while incarcerated. Young people will most likely be unable to change behaviors until their root issues are addressed and taken care of. Connecticut has not developed a true community-based program of care for youth with high levels of need. In addition, our current system disproportionately harms Black and Brown youth.

In the bills I oppose today there are detrimental policy proposals that would do harm to our youth and set us back. Some examples include:

- Increase the sharing of information concerning juvenile cases by law enforcement agencies- This is harmful and aims to expand databases and surveillance of Black and Brown communities. Databases have been used to identify and deport undocumented immigrants.
- Allow for automatic transfer to regular criminal docket for fourteen-year-olds if charged with certain violent crimes: This is harmful because currently, you can't charge a 14-year-old as an adult. We don't believe a child that young should be in the adult system, as these systems are not built or equipped to serve children, and this is essentially rolling back the Raise the Age legislation that was passed in 2015-2016 (which has diverted many kids from the system and has nothing to do with the current climate of youth crime). It's important to know that if they did charge 14-year-olds as adults they'd be sent to Manson Youth Institute. DOJ released findings in December that found they were in violation of civil and disability rights in terms of their conditions and services for young people
- Establish a committee to evaluate the criminal justice system for juveniles and adults. This wants to remove the JJPOC (Juvenile Justice and Policy Oversight Committee). **The JJPOC can and should do the job that's proposed for this group.** Government systems should be held accountable to monitor youth outcomes, encourage system improvements, and invest in effective justice system practices. The Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) was created to oversee the government systems in place. Increasing youth entering the adult system goes counter to the recommendations of the JJPOC.

I am asking you to oppose the bills listed above and SUPPORT S.B. No. 392 and S.B. No. 387 with the recommendations submitted by the Connecticut Justice Alliance and the TOW Youth Justice Institute. Please work with our communities, child advocates, the Community First Coalition, and grassroots groups and so **all children** feel secure and supported by society *regardless of their zip codes*.

Sincerely,

Emily Hofstatter
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